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Preservice and Inservice Elementary Educators  
Knowledge of Elementary Song Repertoire

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of Music

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Music Education

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Terra S. Marsden

November, 2003

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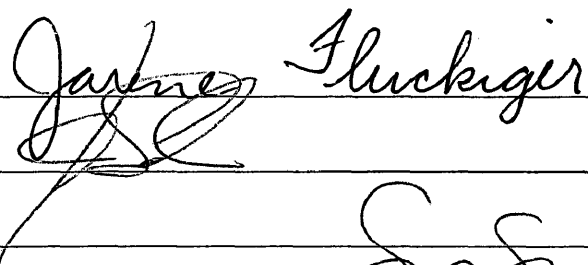


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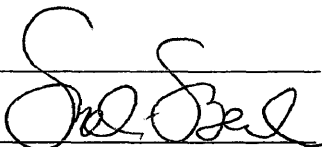
## THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College,  
University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree Master of Music,  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Committee

  
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Chairperson

  
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Date

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PRESERVICE AND INSERVICE ELEMENTARY EDUCATORS  
KNOWLEDGE OF ELEMENTARY SONG REPERTOIRE

Terra S. Marsden, MM

University of Nebraska, 2003

Advisor: Dr. Melissa Berke

The purpose of this study was to examine preservice and inservice elementary educators' knowledge of elementary song repertoire and their confidence with leading selected songs to students. Participants (N=42) in this study were undergraduate elementary education majors and graduate students (non-music majors) enrolled in music education course. Graduate participants involved in this study had just completed their first year of teaching. Participants were surveyed to determine their knowledge of song material and confidence in song leading, with 25 songs randomly selected from the "Get America Singing...Again!" Volumes I and II, published by Music Educators National Conference (MENC, 1996). Results indicated that the average undergraduate (N=18) knowledge/confidence of song material was lower than that of graduates (N=24). Comparisons were also made between age groups; results indicated that older students exhibited more knowledge/confidence of song repertoire. Furthermore, those graduates who taught at the primary level of elementary education (Pre-kindergarten through second grade; N=12) were not as knowledgeable in song material as those who taught intermediate elementary (third grade through sixth grade; N=12). Overall, the mean for undergraduate and graduate knowledge/confidence was under 3, indicating that they were not able to sing any of the song material.

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Preservice and Inservice Elementary Educators Knowledge  
Of Elementary Song Repertoire

**Chapter I**

**INTRODUCTION**

The United States has a long tradition of singing and educating its students in the field of music. The history of American music education in the public school system began in 1838 when the nation's first music educator, Lowell Mason, persuaded the Boston School Committee to adopt music as a formal branch of instruction (Abeles, Hoffer & Klotman, 1995). Since Mason's lobbying, music has continued to be an integral part of the curriculum in a majority of public schools throughout the United States. Its role in the system of education throughout history helped to produce more musically literate generations and promoted musical involvement outside the school system.

In addition to music in the school setting, the popularity of community singing was evident in the early part of the twentieth-century, as is evident by the amount of books published for community singing. Such books include the Eighteen Songs for Community Singing, (1913), 55 Songs and Choruses for Community Singing (1913), Twice 55 + Community Songs (1930), and the Home and Community Songbook (1931). During World War I, a "Liberty Edition" of the 55 Songs and Choruses for Community Singing was published and reportedly sold over one-million copies (Hair, 1999). The song repertoire found throughout these series could be grouped into the following categories; folk, Christmas and composed, including hymns, chorus/opera and

patriotic (Hair, 1999). This wide range of repertoire made available to American communities helped to establish the community song movement and provided the singing American public with a variety of songs that represented the musical heritage of the nation. Undoubtedly, the importance placed on music in the community was largely due to music educators and specialists who were expected to be articulate and skilled in leading community/group singing. Singing became an integral part of American society, finding its way into social, educational, religious and political functions. Groups such as the Boy and Girl Scouts of America and various church and community groups used singing as a primary role in their gatherings (Elliott, 1990). By virtue of being members of these community groups and organizations, Americans learned songs that were an important part of their musical heritage. In recent years however, community singing has suffered a dramatic decline. Many factors are influencing the lack of singing among the general public. These include technological influences, demographic influences, economic and attitudinal influences and identification of song repertoire. One of the major factors is the decline of instructional time allotted for music. In many instances, classroom teachers are responsible for providing music instruction. Therefore, in some situations, music educators at the collegiate level have the responsibility of providing the tools for teaching music to future educators. In other situations, the classroom teachers prior music experience is the only resource they have for providing any type of music experience for their students. Because future classroom educators can have an enormous impact on the amount of singing at the elementary level, it is important to examine factors relating to teacher education.



The purpose of this study is to examine preservice and inservice elementary educators knowledge of elementary song repertoire and their confidence with leading selected songs to students. Research in this area may allow some insight to elementary educators' knowledge of teaching randomly chosen song material to elementary students, and if songs that were supposed to be songs "that every American should know" were truly known by preservice and inservice elementary educators. Furthermore, this may help instructors of fundamentals courses design course content to include specific song material.

## Chapter II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Limited research was found regarding the decline of singing in America. Bennett and Bartholomew (1997) state; "We have reached a point where singing in America is at risk. The most natural act, once commonly practiced by Americans of all ages, is not common anymore". Factors believed to be responsible for this decline in singing are technology, familial influences and attitudinal influences.

#### **Technological Influence on the Decline of Singing**

Elliott (1990) attributes the decline of singing to the invention of new technologies such as the television, computer and various types of audio-playback systems which all but eliminate the need for active music making.

An increasing amount of computer based instructional materials have been made available to music educators as well as performers. Programs such as Band-in-a-Box, Beethoven Lives Upstairs, Music Ace, Rhythmicity, Practica Musica, and Peter and the Wolf have entered classrooms and studios, providing new approaches to learning. Kassner (2000) states; "A single computer can be a very effective tool for introducing, reinforcing, and reviewing most musical skills and concepts listed in the National Standards for Music Education". A current effort of incorporating technology aided teaching into the schools is a project underwritten by the Yamaha Corporation entitled the Music Education Project. The purpose of this project is multi-faceted. It is to enable educators in the development of a group-based music instruction for grades 3-4; to

accelerate and enhance the instruction and learning of music by using new technologies such as the computer and electronic synthesizer (keyboard); to enable elementary students to perform instrumental and vocal music as individuals and as larger ensembles; to aid them in music reading skills; to instruct and assess music fundamentals (Stitgen, 1988). It would be a mistake to assume that technology should be the only wave of teaching future generations, just as it would be a mistake to claim that one music methodology is the only way to instruct singing. Technology should play a role in the process of music education, and should be combined with traditional music activities for a well-rounded method of instruction. Singing should not be left out of curricula that utilize technology.

Along with the computer, other technologies, such as the television and audio-playback systems have invaded the home (e.g. compact disc player) and may be to blame for the decline of the community song movement. It is predicted that the average child spends 4-6 hours a day watching television, hours that are primarily spent with the brain being inactive (Elliot, 1990). With these technological advances so easily at their disposal, communities have gone from playing active roles in music-making to becoming passive listeners. Barbour and Barbour (1997) indicate that recreational technologies such as video game systems also take time away from activities that require more creative, imaginative, physical and problem-solving strategies. The more time that educators, students and communities spend with technology, the less time there is for recreational involvement, such as singing.

## **Familial Influences**

Another factor that has likely contributed to the decline of community singing is the change among the sociological make-up of the American community. The dictionary defines a community as "a body of people living under the same laws". This definition, though vague, gives a working description from which the ensuing demographics were drawn. The idea of the community song movement was to bring together communities and help unify them using a 'common body' of song (Elliott, 1990). The model was established well into the 1930's, however, the composition of the American family has changed dramatically over the past several decades, resulting from significant economic, social and political fluctuations. While the total number of family households expanded 11 percent between 1980 and 1993, the nuclear family (two parents and their biological children) decreased from 31 percent of household families to only 26 percent (Barbour and Barbour, 1997). The decline in the nuclear family however, does not necessarily indicate that other family arrangements are not as viable. Other types of family arrangements include the blended family (remarried with his/her children), the adoptive family, grandparents as the parents, foster family, transient family (migrant workers, homeless, unemployed), same-sex parents family and the combined household family (one or more families living together). The most common of these family types is the single parent family; in the United States today, there are over 15 million children living with one parent (the mother in 90 percent of the cases); nearly two million children in American society live with neither of their biological parents (Goodlad, 1990). Goodlad, in the same study, also states that of the children living with just their mother, 50 percent

of white children live with a mother who is divorced, 54 percent of black children are living with mothers who have never married, and 33 percent of Hispanic children live with mothers who have never married. These fluctuating types of families have also resulted in broad socioeconomic backgrounds as well. As of 1994, five million American children were living below the poverty line; 40 percent of the poor are children, and only 10 percent of the poor in this country are elderly. Current figures project that by the year 2020, senior citizens will outnumber the school-age group for the first time in American history; children currently make up only 26 percent of our total population (Warner, 1997). Demographically speaking, over 90 percent of the population growth is in the southern half of the nation; the northern half of the nation's population is older, richer and better educated and declining in numbers. The white population is primarily concentrated in the northernmost part of the nation, while the southernmost part of the nation is more ethnically diverse, younger, poorer and less educated (Warner, 1997). Married parents are not having children until later in life and the size of the nuclear family has decreased; where formerly one in three households had a child in school, currently one in four households have a child in school (Hinckley, 2000). These demographics represent only a hint of the ever-changing shifts in the American family. Changing family situations and familial relationships likely have an effect on children. Other demographics suggest that racial and ethnic diversity also have a profound effect on communities.

The United States immigration rates over the last decade have reached record highs; 85 percent of immigrants are from Mexico, Central and South America and

Asia (Warner, 1997).

The changing face of the American family, both in types of existing families and racial diversity, has likely had a great effect on the outcome of community singing. The single parent who works is often gone from home, leaving his/her child without the presence of a parent in the home. Even in two-parent households, it is possible that economic situations dictate that both parents must be gone. These children have increasing needs and diverse backgrounds; however, their parent(s) may have little time to devote to spending 'quality' time with their child. Less time at home means less time the family unit can interact in activities that extend beyond meeting life's basic necessities. Family activities which include the entire nuclear family, such as sitting down to a family dinner together or taking a family vacation, have slowly dissipated from the American family. This neglect of family 'togetherness' could include decreased participation in events that would encourage activities such as group singing.

These demographic shifts have affected educational techniques in all areas, including music education. Racial and socioeconomic diversity has led many music educators to reassess the thought of what constitutes 'a common body of song'.

### **Attitudinal Influences**

Research has suggested that students are greatly influenced by the attitudes of their parent(s) concerning school work (Barbour & Barbour, 1997). Barbour and Barbour also state that children, at a very early age, are aware of their family's and community's attitudes regarding education, other cultures, racial or religious groups, as well as roles

that males and females play in society. Most parents are sure that music is important, but some are not convinced that the study of music should have a place in the public school curriculum (Hinckley, 2000). It is fair to say that music educators are in a constant battle to keep music as a part of the public school curriculum. Through the aforementioned statistics, it is visible that family and community attitudes strongly affect children's attitudes. If the families that comprise the communities surrounding public schools question the place of music in the society and the general educational curriculum, it would stand to reason that the children from these families would also question its importance.

The school itself also plays an integral part in affecting the attitudes of children. At the elementary level, the pressure from local, state, and U.S. officials to raise the science, math and reading scores has proved to be tremendous (Stitgen, 1988). This 'back to basics' approach has resulted in the lessening of the time spent in the music classroom, and in some districts, the elimination of music from the curriculum (Bresler, 1993; Stitgen, 1988). Despite the fact that band and orchestra programs at the secondary level flourish, the number of elementary educators is shrinking to unprecedented lows. Stitgen (1988) states that in the school district of San Diego, California, which is comprised of approximately sixty-seven thousand students in 106 schools, that there are five elementary music specialists. That averages out to one specialist for every thirteen thousand students, or one for every twenty-one schools. Other research suggests that there is approximately one music specialist for every 632 elementary pupils on the national level (Stitgen, 1988). This trend could be a likely message about school

administrator's attitudes toward music in the curriculum; a message that will continue to send negative reflections of music in today's educational forum. Many state guidelines recommend that at least twenty minutes daily be devoted to arts, crafts, music, drawing, painting, dramatization, building and constructing (Picerno, 1970). If these guidelines were met, during an elementary school day of 300 minutes, seventy-five minutes per week should be allocated for primary grades and approximately 82.5 minutes per week should be spent on music in the intermediate grades (Picerno, 1970). Picerno (1970) also found that the average time that schools spend on music education on a per week basis averages to approximately 50 minutes per week, well below the recommended mark of 75-82.5 minutes per week. Picerno's (1970) studies also showed that 93 percent of the music supervisors felt that the classroom teacher was not interested in teaching music; this is most likely a result of negative attitudes and lack of confidence in their ability to perform musical activities. These attitudes, if present, will likely determine the attitudes that their students will have towards the presence of music in the curriculum.

Gates (1991) reports that a person's basic value system is developed by the time a child is approximately 8-9 years of age; most institutional music performance groups or beginners are older than this if and when they decide to become involved in the social processes of a musical group. All participants in any kind of music ensemble, beginners as well as veterans, make decisions about participation within the view of personal consequences. Among these consequences is a wide range of benefits and costs, some of the aesthetic, some psychological, some informational, some political, some social, and some broadly or narrowly economic (Gates, 1991). These decisions about music



activities are largely influenced by these factors and set the attitude concerning music in their community. One of the increasingly important goals of music education is to develop positive attitudes toward music (Abeles, Hoffer & Klotman, 1995). The attitudes of the community can largely be determined by the attitude of educators in the school system within the community. Abeles, Hoffer and Klotman (1995) offer three views concerning how attitudes are formed; 1) attitudes are learned through the process of association and reinforcement, 2) attitude situations often present conflicting factors, and that the individual adopts the position that maximizes his/her benefits, and 3) individuals seek consistency in what they encounter and dislike anything that doesn't fit within the realm of the familiar.

Anecdotal evidence and research from Australia, Great Britain, Canada and the United States indicates that both preservice and inservice generalist primary teachers lack the knowledge and confidence to teach music (Bresler, 1993; Jeanneret, 1997). Confidence is most often linked with a teacher's willingness or unwillingness to instruct music in their classrooms, but there have been no studies that have considered the development of tertiary music courses and how they would further enhance the preparation for teaching elementary music as a part of the elementary classroom curriculum (Jeanneret, 1997). In visiting several elementary schools, Bresler (1993) found few teachers included music as a part of their regular curriculum; the activities that were included were singing and listening to music. In the same study, kindergarten teachers were most often the teachers who incorporated music into their curriculum; other teachers claimed that music required special skills and practices which they had not

acquired during the course of their education. Almost all of the participants in Bresler's(1993) study showed a gross lack of musical skills; they were musically illiterate, unable to read simple rhythms or melodic elements and concepts. In an article from Music Educator's Journal, Gamble (1988) states that only twenty-six states currently require the study of arts to achieve teacher certification; to music educators these are staggering statistics and trends that must not continue, or the musical illiteracy of our nation will continue to grow.

### **Preserving the Art of Singing**

The decline of folk-singing among communities is not just a recent concern. Zoltan Kodály, who is reknowned not only as a composer, but as an educator, ethnomusicologist and author as well, was greatly concerned for the musical heritage of his native Hungary. The 1800's saw the diverse country of Hungary tied to Austria and the Hapsburg monarchy (Choksy, 1991). The Hungarian upper class was becoming heavily influenced by Viennese music while true "Hungarian music" went largely unnoticed by the ruling classes of Hungary and professional musicians (Choksy, 1991). Fearing that the musical heritage of Hungary was at risk, Kodály, along with friend and composer Béla Bartók set out to conserve the musical heritage of Hungary. They began their first journey into the countryside of Hungary on a folk-song collecting expedition, the first of which took place in 1905, and later published the twenty songs they had found (Choksy, 1991). Kodály continued these song collecting expeditions throughout his career. Under his direction, The Folk Song Research Group published five volumes

of Hungarian folk-songs, containing over 50,000 songs that were analyzed and categorized.

Few attempts have been made in the United States to identify and preserve our musical heritage through the efforts of song collecting. The most recent attempt to identify and preserve the American musical heritage was made in 1995 when Music Educators National Conference published the "Get America Singing...Again!" series; a two volume work containing 88 songs that the MENC, along with other singing organizations, felt best qualified as the songs with which Americans should be familiar.

### **Identifying Common Song Repertoire**

In 1995, Music Educators National Conference attempted to better identify 'a common body of song' by convening with The Society for Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Singing in America, Sweet Adelines International and Chorus America; following their meeting, they emerged with a list of 88 songs that contain a selection of song material that was selected by a panel of specialists as being 'songs every American should know'. The songs were published in a two-volume series entitled "Get America Singing...Again!" The collection contains many songs that are found in community songbooks from earlier in the twentieth century. As noted by McGuire (2000), the selection of songs were done subjectively and not necessarily based on research-based methodology.

Besides the recent "Get America Singing...Again!" series published by Music Educators National Conference, there have a limited number of other studies that have

attempted to identify 'a common body of song'. Harwood (1987) developed a list of song repertoire that was gathered from students in grades 4 and 5. He selected 15 children and using audiotape, recorded each student individually at a private location. Using those songs that were collected, Harwood analyzed the children's familiarity with those songs. The children involved in the research were selected because teachers and classmates had agreed that those students were familiar with many songs.

Whitlock and Ramsey (1993) investigated song repertoire that Texas educators felt were important to the cultural heritage of Texas. Three-hundred Texas music educators were asked to choose songs (from a list of 288) they believed not only were important to the cultural heritage of Texas, but that they believed all students should know by the end of sixth grade. As stated by McGuire (2000), since the data was collected by the survey, singing the songs was not possible, and 'knowing' them was synonymous with recognizing their titles.

Prickett and Bridges (1998) studied college music majors and elementary education majors' ability to identify standard song repertoire by hearing their melodies and either naming their titles or giving important bits of their lyrics. The songs selected for the examination list were chosen using specified criteria, such as using only songs believed to be known by music education or music therapy students-similar to the method used by Whitlock and Ramsey (1993). The results of the research indicated that correct answers given by music majors were significantly greater than those of entry-level elementary education majors. However, the music majors were found to be deficient in 'standard' song knowledge. Approximately half of the students in either group could not

identify several songs that music educators have stated are very important for children to learn.

Siebnaler (1997) chose 10 of the 42 songs in Volume I of "Get America Singing...Again!" containing less than one octave, sang them with the piano accompaniment into a tape recorder and then played the selections randomly for classes of third, fourth and fifth graders. The students rated each song on a 5-point, Likert-type scale for familiarity and preference. Research indicated that 1) Students preferred songs that were more familiar and 2) as boys got older, there was a significant decrease in the knowledge of songs and their preference for singing. This decline in student preference for singing may be related to attitudinal reasons.

There have been several studies that have researched attitudinal causes of student's perceptions of failure and success in music. According to attribution theorist Weiner (1972), an individual's achievement and motivation are highly influenced by their perceptions about the causes of their success and failures. Although achievement outcomes may be credited to a variety of causes (see Introduction), those most frequently examined include effort, task difficulty, ability and luck. Of these four causes, the most common attribution is effort, most likely because it is personal and modifiable (Austin & Vispoel, 1992; Asmus, 1986; Austin, 2000). Other findings also suggest that ability attributions are more prominent in music than in any other subject area, especially following failure (Austin, 2000). Students who have limited or negative experiences in a music setting may find difficulty in developing music proficiency, despite the relevance of the course materials. If an individual's basic value system is in place by the time they

are approximately nine years of age, (Gates, 1991) then it would stand to reason that it is important for both the classroom teacher and music educator to help provide positive environments in which students can be exposed to the fundamentals of learning music.

The role of the classroom teacher in providing music instruction at the elementary level is constantly changing. This fluctuation can most likely be attributed to continuing shifts in educational practice and philosophy. For example, as noted by Austin (2000), prior to 1960, the current educational trends included "self-contained" classrooms and "student socialization". Under these models, elementary classroom teachers were primarily responsible for the instruction of music; an area in which most educators had little experience. However, after the 1960's music specialists became the centerpieces for developing a sequential curricula and providing the students with the majority of the music instruction. With this development, most elementary educators surrendered the responsibility for teaching music in their classrooms, therefore abandoning any fundamental musical skills that they had developed. In a majority of universities in the United States, it is required for preservice elementary education majors to enroll in a "fundamentals of music" course. These course offerings are generally designed under the assumption that students will gain basic music fundamental skills and use the course content when they become a certified educator. The class instructors of these courses often place an emphasis on the skills and materials that they perceive to be appropriate. Walker (2000) states that with the dismal ratio of music specialists to students, that it is highly probable that the classroom educator would become solely responsible for the music education of elementary students. A study by Hagen (2002) examined the

expectations of elementary administrators regarding the role of the music specialist within the overall school curriculum. Results indicated that administrators were generally satisfied with the music program piloted by the music specialist. The study also indicated that few school administrators expected the classroom teacher to teach music, although many encouraged the teachers to incorporate music when appropriate as well as working with the music specialist in integrating across the curriculum. Saunders and Baker (1991) examined which music competencies classroom teachers felt were most suitable for classroom use. Results indicated that those teachers who voluntarily used music in their classrooms varied significantly across grade levels. Among those surveyed (N=159), 90% of kindergarten teachers involved their students in musical activities and only 3% depended on the music specialists' instructions, whereas only 8% of the 5th grade teachers voluntarily involved their students in music, and 75% left music instruction to the music specialist. A similar study by Stroud (1981) suggested that the most common music activities among classroom teachers included unison singing followed closely by music listening. In the same study, 60% of the teachers interviewed felt that music activities should be correlated with other subject areas.

Previous research builds the need for educators nationwide to be concerned about the current trends in American society. The increased use of technology in the home and in the schools have severely limited the amount of time a student can create and enjoy the aesthetic experiences that active music making can provide. Similarly, trends in American families have had an effect on the decline of singing. The decreased time of family togetherness and the ever changing face of the American family (single parent

households, blended households, etc.) have allowed for less stability at home and less time that parents spend influencing the attitudes of their children. If a child's social and moral attitudes are primarily developed at a young age, then their attitude about singing is likely developed at this age. Therefore, the attitudes of a community toward singing can greatly influence children, especially if their family experiences toward singing have been negative or non-existent. Preserving our musical heritage is dependent not only attitudes, but also on identifying what song repertoire should be considered common to American society.

Once a common song repertoire is established, it is imperative that music educators find ways to transmit this knowledge to their students. Furthermore, in many situations, classroom teachers are responsible for providing music instruction; therefore, it is important to ascertain the knowledge of this song repertoire among elementary classroom teachers and devise ways of incorporating this song knowledge into undergraduate music courses.

The purpose of this study is to examine preservice and inservice elementary educators' knowledge of elementary song repertoire and their confidence with leading selected songs to students.



## **Chapter III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Restatement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine preservice and inservice elementary educators' knowledge of elementary song repertoire and their confidence with leading selected songs to students. Undergraduate elementary education majors (N=18) and graduate students (non-music majors) enrolled in music education courses were surveyed to determine their knowledge and confidence in song leading with selection chosen from the "Get America Singing Again", Volumes I and II, published by Music Educators National Conference (MENC).

#### **Subjects**

Participants were (N=42) elementary education majors enrolled in a music education courses at a midwestern university. The courses were designed for elementary education majors with the intention of developing musical skills and incorporated the practice of integrating music into the elementary classroom curriculum. Two classes of non-music majors were involved in the study; the first class was comprised of undergraduates and the second class was composed of graduate students who had recently completed their first year of teaching at the elementary level.

## Survey

The researcher designed a survey to ascertain subjects' knowledge/confidence with song material. Twenty-five songs were randomly selected from the 89 songs included in Volumes I and II of "Get America Singing...Again!" (MENC, 1996). This series was chosen based on two specific criteria: 1) it is a collection of song material that 'all Americans should know' and 2) the songs were selected by the Music Educators National Conference, the association representing music educators in the United States and is the most recent, up to date collection available. The songs that were randomly selected included the following: 1) *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child*; 2) *Puff the Magic Dragon*; 3) *Simple Gifts*; 4) *Shenandoah*; 5) *Clementine*; 6) *The Erie Canal*; 7) *If I Had a Hammer*; 8) *Give My Regards to Broadway*; 9) *Let Me Call You Sweetheart*; 10) *Danny Boy*; 11) *All Through the Night*; 12) *Auld Lang Syne*; 13) *Oh! Susannah*; 14) *Edelweiss*; 15) *Precious Lord Take My Hand*; 16) *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*; 17) *Every Time I Feel the Spirit*; 18) *America*; 19) *My Favorite Things*; 20) *I've Been Working on the Railroad*; 21) *Old McDonald*; 22) *The Star Spangled Banner*; 23) *My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean*; 24) *When the Saints Go Marching In*; 25) *Down in the Valley*. A full list of all the songs included in the "Get America Singing...Again!" series, Volumes I and II, is available in Appendix B.

The survey was composed of two sections. Section one contained demographic questions regarding age, number of years experience in the teaching field and grade taught, and a question in which students rated their overall perception (based on a 5 point,

Likert-type scale) of their comfort level of singing or performing with their elementary students.

Section two of the survey used the twenty-five songs randomly selected from the "Get America Singing...Again!" (MENC, 1996) series, combining both Volumes I and II. Using a 4-point Likert-type scale, participants rated their knowledge/confidence of the songs that were selected. The scale was rated as follows: 1=don't know the song; 2=would recognize it if I heard it; 3=could sing part of it with a group leader; 4=could confidently lead an elementary class in singing this song. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix A. The researcher piloted the survey with undergraduate music majors as the subject of the study. There were no changes made to the content of the survey.

## **Procedures**

The students were asked to complete the survey on the first day of each class prior to being introduced to any song material that the college instructor would provide, so as not to influence the results of the survey. The survey was administered so as to keep each participant confidential. No post-test was given to test for the increase in song knowledge of song repertoire.

## Chapter IV

### RESULTS

The purpose of this study is to examine preservice and inservice elementary educators' knowledge of elementary song repertoire and their confidence with leading selected songs to students. The researcher was hoping to gain some insight to elementary educators' comfort level of teaching randomly chosen song material to elementary students, and if songs that were supposed to be songs "that every American should know" were truly known by preservice and inservice elementary educators.

Participants in the study (N=42) were graduate and undergraduate students attending a midwestern university. Since the classes contained only one male subject and 41 female subjects, no gender comparisons were made. Participants' years of experience ranged from 0-1 year of experience as one group was composed of undergraduate students (preservice educators) in various levels of their teacher preparation and the other group was composed of educators who were returning to begin graduate classes after one year of experience in the field of education (inservice educators).

There were four questions in the first section of the survey. The first question asked participants to select the age category which was appropriate for their current age. Of the preservice educators (N=18), 72.2% (N=13) were in the 18-29 age group, 16.7% (N=3) were in the 30-39 age group, and 11.1% (N=2) were in the 40-49 age group. There were no preservice educators in the 50 or over age group. Inservice educators (N=24) contained 83.3% (N=20) in the 18-29 age group, 4.2% (N=1) in the 30-39 age group, 8.3% (N=2) in the 40-49 age group, and 4.2% (N=1) in the 50 or over age group.

The second and third questions on the survey applied specifically to the inservice teachers (N=24). The second question asked participants to identify at what grade level they taught during their first year of experience. Grade levels taught among participants ranged from pre-kindergarten-sixth grade. Of the inservice educators 4.2% (N=1) taught pre-kindergarten, 4.2% (N=1) taught kindergarten, 25% (N=6) taught first grade, 8.3% (N=2) taught second grade, 8.3% (N=2) taught a combination second/third grade class, 20.8% (N=5) taught third grade, 12.5% (N=3) taught fourth grade, 8.3% (N=2) taught fifth grade and 8.3% (N=2) taught sixth grade. For the purposes of this study has grouped the inservice educators into two levels of elementary education; those teaching pre-kindergarten to second grade will be referred to as primary, and third grade to sixth grade will be considered intermediate. Combination classes were grouped with the primary level. Primary educators composed 50% (N=12) of the inservice educators while intermediate educators composed the other 50% (N=12). The third question on the survey asked participants to list their number of years in the teaching field; all inservice educators had one of year of experience in the teaching field.

The final question on the first section of the survey asked participants to identify their overall comfort level with singing/performing music with their students. Results indicated that the average comfort level of preservice educators ( $\underline{M}$ =1.27) was lower than that of inservice educators ( $\underline{M}$ =2.79).

During the second section of the survey, students were asked to rate their knowledge of randomly selected song material using a 4-point scale. The scale was as follows: 1=don't know the song; 2=would recognize it if I heard it; 3=could sing part of it

with a group leader; 4=could confidently lead an elementary class in singing this song.

Table 1 lists the song ratings and averages for both graduate and undergraduate participants.

Table 1  
Song Ratings for Graduate and Undergraduate Participants

Song	Undergrad Rate	Undergrad Avg.	Grad Rate	Grad Avg.
Old McDonald	1	4	1	3.88
I've Been Working on the Railroad	2	3.67	4	3.67
Star Spangled Banner	3	3.61	3	3.79
America	4	3.44	2	3.83
Puff the Magic Dragon	5	3.39	5	3.46
Oh! Susannah	6	3.39	7	3.42
When The Saints Go Marching In	7	3.33	6	3.46
Clementine	8	3.28	8	3.13
Swing Low, Sweet Chariot	9	3.06	9	2.75
My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean	10	2.89	11	2.71
My Favorite Things	11	2.44	10	2.71
Give My Regards to Broadway	12	2.28	17	2.0
Danny Boy	13	2.22	14	2.29
Edelweiss	14	2.17	13	2.38
Auld Lang Syne	15	2.0	15	2.17
If I Had a Hammer	16	1.89	12	2.42
Let Me Call You Sweetheart	17	1.89	20	1.92
Down in the Valley	18	1.83	16	2.08
The Erie Canal	19	1.72	19	1.92
Simple Gifts	20	1.61	21	1.67
Shenandoah	21	1.61	18	1.96
All Through the Night	22	1.44	22	1.5
Precious Lord, Take My Hand	23	1.22	23	1.42
Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child	24	1.17	24	1.38
Every Time I Feel The Spirit	25	1.11	25	1.29

There was little difference between the knowledge among preservice educators and inservice educators. The overall average of song knowledge among inservice educators

was slightly higher ( $\underline{M}=2.6$ ) than that of preservice educators ( $\underline{M}=2.42$ ). The most familiar song among both graduate and undergraduate students was *Old McDonald* (undergraduate,  $\underline{M}=4$ ; graduate,  $\underline{M}=3.88$ ) while the least familiar were the two spirituals *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child* (undergraduate,  $\underline{M}=1.48$ ; graduate  $\underline{M}=1.33$ ) and *Every Time I Feel the Spirit* (undergraduate,  $\underline{M}=1.11$ ; graduate,  $\underline{M}=1.29$ ). Results also indicated that the first five songs for each group of participants were the same. The top five songs were as follows; *Old McDonald*, *America*, *The Star Spangled Banner*, *I've Been Working on the Railroad*, and *Puff the Magic Dragon*. While rate order varied, the next six songs were: 1) *When the Saints Go Marching In* (undergraduate,  $\underline{M}=3.33$ ; graduate,  $\underline{M}=3.46$ ); 2) *Oh! Susannah* (undergraduate  $\underline{M}=3.39$ ; graduate,  $\underline{M}=3.42$ ); 3) *Clementine* (undergraduate,  $\underline{M}=3.28$ ; graduate,  $\underline{M}=3.13$ ); 4) *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* (undergraduate,  $\underline{M}=3.06$ ; graduate,  $\underline{M}=2.75$ ); 5) *My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean* (undergraduate,  $\underline{M}=2.89$ ; graduate,  $\underline{M}=2.71$ ); 6) *My Favorite Things* (undergraduate,  $\underline{M}=2.44$ ; graduate,  $\underline{M}=2.71$ )

Data were also compared to see if there were differences in the knowledge of song repertoire among age categories. Results indicated that those in age category one (18-29 years of age;  $N=34$ ) had a rating of  $\underline{M}=2.23$ , age category two (30-39 years of age;  $N=4$ ) had a rating of  $\underline{M}=2.85$ , those in age category three (40-49 years of age;  $N=3$ ) had a rating of 3.45, and those in age category 4 (50 or over;  $N=1$ ) had a rating of  $\underline{M}=3.92$ .

Comparisons were also made regarding the song ratings among the graduate participants who had one year of teaching experience. Graduates ( $N=24$ ) were grouped

into those who were primary level educators (N=12) and those who were intermediate level educators (N=12). For the purposes of this study, primary level includes those graduates who taught grades pre-kindergarten to second grade, and intermediate includes graduates who taught third through sixth grade. Results indicated that the average rating for primary educators' song knowledge was  $\underline{M}=2.44$ , and those who taught at the intermediate level had a song knowledge of  $\underline{M}=2.54$ .



## Chapter V

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine preservice and inservice elementary educators' knowledge of elementary song repertoire and their confidence with teaching selected songs to students. Undergraduate elementary education majors (N=18) and graduate students (non-music majors) enrolled in music education courses were surveyed to determine their knowledge and confidence in song leading with selection chosen from the "Get America Singing... Again!" series, Volumes I and II, published by Music Educators National Conference (MENC, 1996). Participants rated songs on the survey according to a 4-point scale. The scale was as follows: 1=don't know the song; 2=would recognize it if I heard it; 3=could sing part of it with a group leader; 4=could confidently lead an elementary class in singing this song.

### Summary of Results

Overall, students only rated nine songs out of the twenty-five on the survey as songs they would be able to sing with a leader. Those nine songs were as follows:

1) *Old McDonald* (undergraduate,  $\underline{M}$ =3.88; graduate,  $\underline{M}$ =4.0); 2) *I've Been Working on the Railroad* (undergraduate,  $\underline{M}$ =3.67; graduate,  $\underline{M}$ =3.67); 3) *Star Spangled Banner* (undergraduate,  $\underline{M}$ =3.61; graduate,  $\underline{M}$ =3.79); 4) *America* (undergraduate,  $\underline{M}$ =3.44, graduate,  $\underline{M}$ =3.83); 5) *Puff the Magic Dragon* (undergraduate,  $\underline{M}$ =3.39; graduate  $\underline{M}$ =3.46); 6) *Oh! Susannah* (undergraduate,  $\underline{M}$ =3.39; graduate  $\underline{M}$ =3.42); 7) *When the Saints Go Marching In* (undergraduate,  $\underline{M}$ =3.33; graduate,  $\underline{M}$ =3.46); 8) *Clementine*

(undergraduate,  $\underline{M}$ =3.28; graduate,  $\underline{M}$ =3.13); 9) *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*

(undergraduate,  $\underline{M}$ =3.06). There was only one song that students in the graduate class (N=24) felt they could lead an elementary class in singing *Old McDonald*.

Undergraduates did not rate any songs at "4"(Could confidently lead an elementary class in singing this song). Overall, students did not have the confidence/knowledge to be able to sing or lead elementary students in singing any of the songs that were listed on the survey.

Age also played an important role in the knowledge of song material. Graduate participants who fell into the 18-29 age category (N=34) had the lowest average ( $\underline{M}$ =2.23). Graduate participants in the 30-39 category (N=4) had an average of  $\underline{M}$ =2.85. Those in the 40-49 category (N=3) had an average 3.45 and those who were 50 or over (N=1) had the highest average of  $\underline{M}$ =3.92. As students got older, their knowledge of song material increased. Graduates, in general, were more confident in their knowledge of song repertoire, most likely due to the fact that they had completed a fundamentals of music course at the collegiate level. Confidence of graduates could also be attributed to them having had one year of teaching experience, therefore having an affect on their overall confidence to teach. Furthermore, graduates may have had student contact that caused their overall song knowledge to be higher. Among graduate students, the primary educators (N=12) were also more confident than intermediate teachers (N=12). This contradicts other research available.

## Discussion

The lack of significance between graduate and undergraduate participants knowledge of song repertoire can be attributed to several factors. It is possible that the songs that were randomly selected from the "Get America Singing...Again!" (MENC, 1996) series were not representative of songs that elementary educators should know. Furthermore, it is possible the songs selected by the MENC itself were not songs that "all Americans know" (see Appendix B for complete listing of songs from the "Get America Singing...Again!" series, Volumes I and II). College textbooks used in teaching fundamentals of music classes to future classroom educators may have been a more appropriate source for song material, as they may have contained song material with which both graduate and undergraduate participants would have been more familiar.

The survey attempted to have students identify to which age category they belonged (18-29; 30-39; 40-49; 50 or over) so as to determine the difference of song knowledge among age groups. However, these participants were a homogeneous group, with a majority of the participants (N=42) belonging to the 18-29 age group (N=34). The slightly higher average of song knowledge among graduates (M=2.6) may be attributed to the one year of teaching experience in which they had contact with elementary students, compared to undergraduates who had not yet experienced their first year of teaching and therefore had little student contact.

When participants were rating their knowledge of song repertoire, it is likely that they took into consideration their own self-perceptions of singing, as well as self-confidence in their ability to sing and lead a song with their elementary students. Austin

(2000) had similar findings in his study. Out of three-hundred and sixty elementary education majors involved in Austin's study, all future classroom teachers rated themselves as being only "good" or "fair" at singing.

### **Educational Implications**

The knowledge of folk songs and songs that are important to our cultural heritage are rapidly on the decline among educators, and therefore are not being sung in the school climate. Fewer songs are being sung in the classroom and even fewer are being sung in the home, where families have an important impact on the musical awareness of their child. If there is not immediate action, some of the songs that have been an important part of American culture for generations will be lost to children. Since children are the future of American culture, their musical heritage must be preserved. Future classroom educators and inservice educators, as well as music specialists must take the responsibility to have students be knowledgeable in song repertoire, and therefore must be held accountable for knowing song repertoire themselves. However, few inservice teachers provide any type of music instruction in the classroom. Most likely, the 'back to basics' approach and increased pressure at both state and national levels for students to excel in math, science and other classroom studies have forced classroom educators to abandon the use of music in their classrooms. Other issues such as classroom educators' level of comfort in singing and performing with their students and educators' limited knowledge of song repertoire also are contributing factors. Participants, when asked to rate their knowledge of song repertoire, most likely took into account their own self-

perceptions and confidence in their ability to sing. Each participant also brings with them their own past experiences in music and their attitudes about their abilities are likely linked with past failures and successes in music (Austin, 2000).

With parents at home less, public schools are becoming solely responsible for the cultural awareness of children. As Americans we are becoming culturally passive, as active music-making has been replaced by technological advances such as the television, radio and computer. If musical knowledge is not furnished for students at the elementary level to encourage musical growth, American society will continue to produce musically illiterate children whose only knowledge of music will be what they learn from the radio or television.

Maintaining the folk-song heritage of America is a task not taken lightly by many music educators. Kodály music educators have seen the intrinsic value of using folk-song repertoire for many generations. Kodály himself was strongly convicted that music literacy was best achieved using the musical 'mother-tongue' method (Choksy, 1981). Therefore, in order for the musical heritage of a nation to remain strong, the folk-songs common to that society must be taught. Kodály educators have a set song repertoire that teaches specific concepts that students need to learn to become responsible musicians. All educators should be able to identify a 'set' song repertoire to be held accountable for teaching their students so as to preserve the musical heritage of America. If this is done, educators must also decide as to what criteria song selection should be based. Music educators who do not obtain special certification such as Kodály or Orff often use district textbooks as their main source of song material. Basal series music textbooks are

straying away from folk-song material and concentrating more on pop culture. Songs that children have known in the past are becoming extinct among American society; for example, among participants in this survey, the song 'The Erie Canal', which is still listed in many basal series music textbooks today (Anderson & Lawrence, 2001; Bennett & Bartholomew, 1999; Hackett & Lindeman, 1997; Richardson & Atterbury, 2001) was rated number 19 on both lists by both preservice and inservice elementary educators. As educators, we are failing to preserve the musical heritage of our country and in turn, failing our children.

Overall, preservice and inservice elementary educators comfort level in leading song material was extremely low. However, graduate students, who had one year of teaching experience, had a significantly higher level of comfort than preservice educators. This was most likely due to the fact that they had gained one year of experience in the teaching field and had more confidence in their overall ability to teach because of their experience. The most familiar song among both groups was *Old McDonald*. This is likely due to students having had experience with this song at a young age and repeatedly hearing the song throughout their childhood. It is also likely that the song brings to mind some positive childhood experience from their past. The least familiar song was the spiritual *Every Time I Feel the Spirit*, closely followed by another spiritual *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child*. These were songs that participants may not have had introduced to them in their elementary years of education and therefore, since participants may have had only limited experience with music since elementary, they most likely didn't encounter these songs at any other point in their lives.

Furthermore, song material that was randomly selected for this study may not have been representative of the song repertoire that classroom educators would be familiar.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The present study provides opportunities for further research concerning the knowledge of song repertoire among current and future classroom educators. Further consideration should be given to the identification of song repertoire and what songs would be suitable for classroom educators. Any interpretations of the results of this study should be taken with caution. When participants are responding to each song under such a premise, they have interpreted their own self-perceptions of their ability to sing. Also the size of the sample (N=42) may not likely be representative of all preservice and inservice educators. Future research could be improved upon by using a larger sample population and by implementing other research designs to help further validity.

While care was taken to construct a valid survey, the rating system established may have allowed for some subjective interpretation on the part of the subjects. The survey was intended to help students rate their knowledge of elementary song repertoire; however, the rating system, in order to give more valid results needed to be adapted so as to measure the variable of 'knowledge'. Perhaps a more effective wording for the song rating part of the survey could be as follows: 1=Don't know the song; 2=Would know the song if I heard it; 3=Know part of the song and could sing it with a group leader, 4=Know the song and could confidently lead an elementary class in singing this song. Also, a definition of song knowledge could have been provided to participants to help

alleviate any misconceptions of the term. Song knowledge could best be defined as being acquainted with the melody and the lyrics of a selected song.

Future research in this area is warranted, as classroom teachers are sometimes the only resource for a student's musical education. This group of future educators, if provided with the proper musical resources at the collegiate level could become a great musical resource for American children. More research should be done to ensure that fundamentals of music classes at the collegiate level are providing the proper training to increase the knowledge and confidence level of elementary educators in the area of singing elementary song repertoire.



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## Appendix A

### Survey

1) I am currently... (circle one)

18-29 years of age    30-39 years of age    40-49 years of age    50 or over

2) What grade level do you currently teach (if not applicable, skip to question 4)?

3) How many years have you been teaching at the elementary level of education?

4) On a scale of 1-5, 1 being the **least comfortable** and 5 being the **most comfortable**, how would you rate your comfort level of singing or performing music with your students? (Circle one)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

least comfortable .....most comfortable

5) Rate the below listed songs from 1-4, based on the following scale;

1=Don't know the song

2=Would recognize it if I heard it

3=Could sing part of it with a group leader

4=Could confidently lead an elementary class in singing this song

a) Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child

1                      2                      3                      4

b) Puff the Magic Dragon

1                      2                      3                      4

c) Simple Gifts

1                      2                      3                      4

d) Shenandoah

1                      2                      3                      4

e) (Oh My Darling) Clementine	1	2	3	4
f) The Erie Canal	1	2	3	4
g) If I Had a Hammer (The Hammer Song)	1	2	3	4
h) Give My Regards to Broadway	1	2	3	4
i) Let Me Call You Sweetheart	1	2	3	4
j) Danny Boy	1	2	3	4
k) All Through the Night	1	2	3	4
l) Auld Land Syne	1	2	3	4
m) Oh! Susannah	1	2	3	4
n) Edelweiss	1	2	3	4
o) Precious Lord, Take My Hand	1	2	3	4
p) Swing Low, Sweet Chariot	1	2	3	4
q) Every Time I Feel the Spirit	1	2	3	4
r) America (My Country 'Tis of Thee)	1	2	3	4

s) My Favorite Things

1 2 3 4

t) I've Been Working On the Railroad

1 2 3 4

u) Old McDonald

1 2 3 4

v) The Star Spangled Banner

1 2 3 4

w) My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean

1 2 3 4

x) When the Saints Go Marching In

1 2 3 4

y) Down in the Valley

1 2 3 4

## Appendix B

### Song Listings from Volumes I and II of "Get America Singing...Again!" Series

#### Volume I

Amazing Grace  
 America (My Country, 'Tis of Thee)  
 America the Beautiful  
 Battle Hymn of the Republic  
 Blue Skies  
 Danny Boy (Londonderry Air)  
 De colores  
 Do-Re-Mi  
 Down By the Riverside  
 Frère Jacques  
 Give My Regards to Broadway  
 God Bless America  
 God Bless The U.S.A.  
 Green, Green Grass of Home  
 Havah Nagilah  
 He's Got the Whole World in His Hands  
 Home on the Range  
 I've Been Working on the Railroad  
 If I Had a Hammer (The Hammer Song)  
 Let There Be Peace On Earth  
 Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing  
 Michael (Row the Boat Ashore)  
 Dona Nobis Pacem  
 Music Alone Shall Live  
 My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean  
 Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'  
 Oh! Susannah  
 Over My Head  
 Puff the Magic Dragon  
 Rock-A-My Soul  
 Sakura  
 Shalom Chaverim  
 She'll Be Comin' Round the Mountain  
 Shenandoah  
 Simple Gifts  
 Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child  
 Swing Low, Sweet Chariot  
 This Land Is Your Land  
 Take Me Out to the Ball Game  
 The Star Spangled Banner  
 Yesterday  
 Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah  
 This Little Light of Mine

#### Volume II

All Through the Night  
 Auld Lang Syne  
 Both Sides Now  
 Camptown Races  
 (Oh My Darling) Clementine  
 Down in the Valley  
 Edelweiss  
 The Erie Canal  
 Every Time I Feel the Spirit  
 Five Hundred Miles  
 Follow the Drinkin' Gourd  
 Getting to Know You  
 Goodnight, Irene  
 Guantanamo  
 I Got Rhythm  
 I Love the Mountains  
 It's a Small World  
 Jamaica Farewell  
 Kum Ba Yah  
 Let It Be  
 Let Me Call You Sweetheart  
 Make New Friends  
 The Midnight Special  
 My Favorite Things  
 Old McDonald Had a Farm  
 Over the Rainbow  
 Peace Like a River  
 Precious Lord, Take My Hand  
 The Red River Valley  
 Rock Around the Clock  
 Side By Side  
 Take Me Home, Country Roads  
 Try To Remember  
 Turn! Turn! Turn! (To Everthing There Is a Season)  
 Water is Wide  
 We Shall Overcome  
 What a Wonderful World  
 When Johnny Comes Marching Home  
 When the Saints Go Marching In  
 Where Have All the Flowers Gone?  
 Yankee Doodle  
 You Are My Sunshine  
 You Are the Sunshine of My Life  
 You're A Grand Old Flag  
 You've Got a Friend